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NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES NOT INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

Issues related to the preparation, compilation and consideration of communications

Note by the secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. At its first session, the Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 8/CP.1* relating to first communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention, requested the subsidiary bodies to develop, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its second session (COP 2), recommendations on guidelines for the preparation of national communications from non-Annex I Parties and proposals for the process to consider these communications, in accordance with Article 10 of the Convention.

2. At the same session the COP also adopted decision 6/CP.1 relating to the respective roles of, and relationship between, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), including with respect to the communication of information. The programme of work of these bodies, as discussed in their first sessions, allocates responsibility for taking the lead to the SBSTA with regard to recommendations on guidelines for the communications and to the SBI with regard to the process for considering the communications (FCCC/SBSTA/1995/2, paras. 23-27; FCCC/SBI/1995/2, paras. 9-13; FCCC/SB/1995/INF.1, para. 2).

3. The SBSTA, at its first session, requested the secretariat to prepare, for consideration by the SBSTA at its second session, recommendations on guidelines for the preparation of national communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention, taking into account the views expressed by the Parties and the papers submitted by the Parties, including document A/AC.237/MISC.40. The SBSTA further requested the secretariat to facilitate the exchange and sharing of information among Parties for the preparation of initial communications, including forums in which discussions of technical and common aspects of such communications could be undertaken, and to seek extra budgetary funds for that purpose (FCCC/SBSTA/1995/3, para. 35 (a) and (b)).

4. The Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate (AGBM), at its second session, noted the readiness of Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention to advance the preparation of their initial communications, taking into account Article 4.3, 4.5, and 4.7 of the Convention and paragraph 2 (b) of decision 1/CP.1 (the Berlin Mandate), in order to supplement their sustainable development. It was agreed that a workshop should be organized by the Chairs of the AGBM, the SBSTA, and the Group of 77 and China, with the assistance of the secretariat, to exchange experiences on the methodologies for, and preparation of, the initial communications (FCCC/AGBM/1995/7, paras. 42 and 44).

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* For decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its first session, see document FCCC/CP/1995/7/Add.1.

B. Scope of the note

5. This note proposes elements to assist the subsidiary bodies in deciding on the possible guidelines for the content of the communications from Parties not included in Annex I. It also makes proposals to facilitate the preparation of these communications.

6. Since COP 2 is to receive proposals from the subsidiary bodies for the process to consider these communications, this note also makes some observations on this matter in order to assist the subsidiary bodies in developing their approach in time.

7. The note has been developed on the basis of the text of the Convention, relevant intergovernmental decisions, the views submitted by Parties and the Group of 77 and China, as well as experiences of Parties in the preparation of their communications.

8. The note deals with issues to be considered by the SBSTA (see section III); issues to be considered by the SBI (see section IV); and raises issues for consideration by both bodies (see section V). The annex includes a set of elements that could be considered in any decision on the guidelines for the preparation of communications from Parties not included in Annex I.

9. In accordance with Article 12.1, the note refers to the communication of information from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention, or "non-Annex I Parties". The secretariat assumes that the term "first" communication, referred to in decision 8/CP.1, has the same meaning as "initial" communication, referred to in Article 12.5. Where this note refers to "communications" and "guidelines", these refer to communications from Parties not included in Annex I and to guidelines for their preparation, unless it is stated otherwise.

C. Possible action by the subsidiary bodies

10. According to Article 12.5, communications from Parties not included in Annex I will become due as from March 1997, on account of the entry into force of the Convention for these Parties. On this basis, 46 such communications are due in 1997 and 27 are due in 1998. Parties that are least developed countries may make their communications at their discretion. By the end of 1995, the Convention had entered into force for 34 such Parties; up to 34 further communications may thus be forthcoming in 1997 and 1998. The process would be facilitated by the early availability of guidelines for the preparation of the communications.

11. In view of the need to take timely action, and on the basis of their mandates and work plans, each subsidiary body may aim to advance its work on the preparation of communications from Parties not included in Annex I, taking account of the relevant parts of this document and of other information, in particular the results of the workshop convened by the Group of 77 and China, scheduled to be held on 26 February 1996.

12. The SBSTA may aim at adopting conclusions and/or recommendations to the COP that would address the guidelines for the content of the communications from Parties not included in Annex I.

13. The SBI may likewise aim at adopting conclusions and/or recommendations to the COP that would address the facilitation of the preparation of the communications by Parties not included in Annex I.

14. Both the subsidiary bodies may also discuss how to approach the process for consideration of the communications, as requested by the COP, and to seek the views of Parties on this matter.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Convention provisions

15. A number of articles provide the substantive and procedural framework for the compilation, communication and consideration of information. Article 12.1 provides that each Party shall communicate to the COP, through the secretariat, elements of information related to implementation. Article 4.1 contains the general commitments of Parties, including those related to the communication of information to the COP. Article 10.2(a) provides that the SBI shall consider the information communicated in accordance with Article 12.1, to assess the overall aggregated effect of the steps taken by all Parties in the light of the latest scientific assessments concerning climate change. Article 9.2 provides that the SBSTA shall provide assessments of the state of scientific knowledge relating to climate change and its effects, prepare scientific assessments on the effects of measures taken in the implementation of the Convention and provide advice on promoting development and/or transferring technologies and supporting endogenous capacity-building.

16. Article 12.4 provides that projects for financing could be included in the communications. Article 12.5 provides a time-frame for the initial communications. Article 12.6 requires the secretariat to transmit as soon as possible the information communicated to the COP and the subsidiary bodies. Article 12.7 provides for provision of technical and financial support in compiling and communicating information. According to Article 8.2(c) the secretariat is to facilitate such assistance, on request. The agreed full costs incurred by developing country Parties on the communications are to be met, in accordance with Article 4.3.

17. The COP is required by Article 7.2(e) to assess, on the basis of all information made available to it, the implementation of the Convention by all Parties, the overall effects of the measures taken and the extent to which progress towards the objective of the Convention is being achieved.

B. Other relevant decisions

18. It may be recalled that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, at its eighth session, agreed that decisions taken with regard to communications by Annex I Parties would, to some extent, also be relevant to the communications of developing country Parties due at a later stage (A/AC.237/41, para. 66). The possibility was discussed of developing country Parties setting up units, if they so desire, supported by the financial mechanism, to serve as contact points for implementation of the activities under the Convention. The value of informal consultations among Parties on matters related to communication of information was recognized. The task of compiling and synthesizing information contained in national communications was considered important for the purpose of assessing the overall effect of the measures.

19. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, at its ninth session, concluded that a first step, related to communication of information referred to in Article 12.1, would be the elaboration of the format and content of such communication and the identification of the needs of developing country Parties with respect to capacity-building activities to enable them to fulfil their obligations under Article 12.1. In this connection, the Committee took note of the intention of the Group of 77 and China to convene a meeting of experts from developing countries (A/AC.237/55, para. 82).

20. The COP has adopted decisions related to communication of information from Parties not included in Annex I (decision 8/CP.1) and the respective roles of the subsidiary bodies with respect to the information communicated (decision 6/CP.1). As stated above, the SBSTA has requested the secretariat to prepare recommendations on guidelines for the preparation of the communications (FCCC/SBSTA/1995/3).

C. Views submitted by Parties

21. The COP, by its decision 8/CP.1, invited Parties to submit views on guidelines to be developed for the preparation of the communications from Parties not included in Annex I as well as on the process to consider these communications. Views have been submitted by the Group of 77 and China (A/AC.237/MISC. 40), the United Kingdom (FCCC/SB/1995/MISC.1) and Brazil (FCCC/SB/1996/MISC.1). These views focus on the preparation of the communications.

D. Other inputs

22. The subsidiary bodies may wish to consider as appropriate any relevant conclusions of the workshop of Parties not included in Annex I, scheduled to be held on 26 February 1996. The objective of the workshop is to exchange experiences on the methodologies for, and preparation of, the communications, and a report on its conclusions will be presented to the SBSTA. The subsidiary bodies may also wish to take into account the experience of Parties

included in Annex I in the preparation of their communications as well as other relevant experience from Parties.

23. The SBI may wish to take into consideration the paper on the "Enabling activities for the preparation of the first national communication in climate change: operational criteria", prepared by the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in October 1995. The document provides that the criteria will be revised once guidelines for communications from Parties not included in Annex I have been adopted by the COP.

III. GUIDELINES FOR THE CONTENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

24. In response to the above-mentioned request by the SBSTA, the secretariat has elaborated a number of elements that may be included in such guidelines. These are contained in the annex to this document.

25. The indicated elements would serve to establish consistency, transparency, and comparability of information, as well as flexibility to accommodate the diversity of national situations. The communications could be based on available relevant information and describe the further action being taken, or needing to be taken, at the national level, with regard to the compilation of information.

26. The SBSTA may consider these elements in developing guidelines for adoption by the COP. It may wish to recommend that, in the interim, Parties not included in Annex I refer to these elements in the preparation of their communications. It may also recommend that those Parties not included in Annex I who wish to submit voluntarily additional information may use elements from the guidelines approved for Parties included in Annex I when preparing their communications.

27. In order to enable the COP to consider the national development priorities, objectives, and circumstances of the Parties not included in Annex I, in accordance with Article 4.1, and the provisions of Article 4.3, 4.5, and 4.7, the SBSTA may wish to recommend that such Parties provide relevant information in their communications.

IV. FACILITATION OF PREPARATION OF COMMUNICATIONS

28. The short time available to Parties not included in Annex I for the preparation of their communications, and their differentiated capacities, justify facilitative activities to support the process. Some such activities are proposed for the consideration of the SBI:

(a) The nomination of national focal points would facilitate the preparation of the communications;

(b) The organization of cooperative activities to share experiences, provide relevant information, and identify "best practices" would improve capabilities for the preparation of the communications. Thematic workshops, with technical inputs from regional institutions and other experts, can be a cost-effective way to deal with practical issues arising during the preparation of the communications. It may be recalled that the value of informal consultations among Parties on matters relating to communication of information has been recognized by all Parties (see A/AC.237/41, para. 66) and the SBSTA has requested the secretariat to facilitate the exchange and sharing of information among Parties, including forums in which discussions of technical and common aspects of such communication could be undertaken (FCCC/SBSTA/1995/3, para. 35 (b));

(c) The early preparation and submission of project proposals for seeking financial and technical support for the preparation of these communications from the GEF (as the interim operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention), other Parties or competent international organizations, and the timely approval of these projects, would help the process.

29. These elements would link capabilities, requirements for support, and the time schedule for the communications provided in the Convention. Forums, workshops and training, as well as sharing of information, would also build capacity in the least developed countries to enable them to submit their initial communications in a similar time frame as other Parties not included in Annex I. The availability of all communications within an agreed time-frame, and comparability of information, is important for consideration of the communications. In this context, the secretariat could continue to facilitate the provision of financial and technical support. A progress report on the secretariat's activities is given in document FCCC/SBI/1996/4. These activities will need to evolve to meet the emerging needs of the Parties not included in Annex I.

V. DEVELOPING AN APPROACH TO CONSIDERATION OF COMMUNICATIONS

30. The COP has requested the subsidiary bodies to develop, for consideration at COP 2, proposals for the process to consider the information communicated by Parties not included in Annex I. Such a process would have to deal with scientific and technical aspects, to be considered by the SBSTA, as well as policy aspects, to be dealt with by the SBI. The process may be assisted by the secretariat preparing a compilation and synthesis of the information communicated, if requested by the subsidiary bodies.

31. Parties have not submitted views on the process for consideration of the communications. In this context, assuming that the subsidiary bodies would only have an initial exchange of views, this item would have to be taken up at their third sessions, in order to meet the deadline set by the COP.

32. In order to prepare for further discussions, the subsidiary bodies may wish to request the secretariat to provide a compilation of any views on the process for consideration of the communications from Parties not included in Annex I, which may have been transmitted by the Parties to the secretariat by 15 April 1996. The subsidiary bodies may wish to further request the secretariat to prepare a note for their third sessions on the process for consideration of the communications from Parties not included in Annex I, including budgetary considerations, on the basis of discussions in the subsidiary bodies and any views submitted by Parties.

Annex

ELEMENTS THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED IN THE GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES NOT INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

1. The guidelines for the preparation of communications by Parties not included in Annex I would have four principal purposes:

(a) To assist Parties not included in Annex I in meeting their commitments under Articles 4.1 and 12.1

(b) To facilitate the process of preparation, compilation and consideration of the communications

(c) To encourage the presentation of information in ways that are consistent, transparent, and comparable as well as flexible, to take into account specific national situations and requirements for support

(d) To ensure that the Conference of the Parties has sufficient information to carry out its responsibilities to assess the overall aggregated effects of the steps taken by the Parties in the light of the latest scientific assessments concerning climate change, and of the implementation of the Convention

Scope

2. In accordance with Article 12.1(a), (b) and (c), and Article 4.1(j), the communication should include:

(a) A national inventory of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of all greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, to the extent the capacity of the Party permits, using comparable methodologies

(b) A general description of steps taken or envisaged by the Party to implement the Convention

(c) Any other information that the Party considers relevant to the achievement of the objective of the Convention and suitable for inclusion in its communication, including, if feasible, material relevant for calculations of global emission trends

Inventory

3. Article 12.1(a) provides that the communication should include a national inventory of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of all greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol. Information should be provided on carbon dioxide (CO_2) and, to the extent the Parties' capacities permit, on methane (CH_4) and nitrous oxide (N_2O). Parties may provide information on ozone (O_3) precursors, carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), as well as on other greenhouse gases, including, inter alia, perfluorocarbons (PFCs), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), and sulphur hexafluoride (SF_6).

4. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories should be used in estimating, reporting, and verifying inventory data. The simplest default calculations of emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), and nitrous oxide (N_20) recommended in the Guidelines are available as a minimum, but Parties are encouraged to use the fuller methodology. Parties that already have an established and comparable methodology, emission factors or activity data could use that data, provided that they include sufficient documentation to back up the data presented. Where nationally generated data is used, the level of uncertainty associated with default emission factors, activity data and underlying assumptions adopted should be discussed qualitatively and, where possible, quantitatively.

5. Quantitative data related to inventories of greenhouse gas emissions and removals should be presented on a gas-by-gas basis with emissions by sources listed separately from removals by sinks, except in cases where it is technically impossible to separate information on sources and sinks. In addition, Parties may choose to use global warming potentials (GWPs) to reflect their inventories in carbon dioxide-equivalent terms. Parties may also choose to use the analytical approach related to adaptation and the information provided by the IPCC in its 1994 Special Report as well as the analytical approach related to assessment of mitigation options using information provided by the IPCC in its 1995 Second Assessment Report.

6. The year 1990 should be the base year for inventories.

7. If, in addition, Parties wish to present their inventory data in other forms, inter alia, greenhouse gas emissions per capita, this information could be provided in a section of the communication dealing with national circumstances. If possible, it would also be desirable to include some information on historical trends so as to put the inventory information in context.

General description of steps

8. Article 12.1 requires Parties not included in Annex I to provide a general description of steps taken or envisaged by the Party to implement the Convention. These steps could be

related to the achievement of sustainable development and need not have as a primary objective the limitation of greenhouse gas emissions. Parties may provide, to the extent possible, an assessment of the effect of the steps taken.

9. The communication may include information on national and, where appropriate, regional programmes containing measures to mitigate and facilitate adequate adaptation to climate change (Article 4.1(b)).

10. The communication may also include information on steps to promote the following (including requirements for support):

(a) The development, application and diffusion, including transfer, of technologies, practices and processes that control, reduce or prevent anthropogenic emissions in all relevant sectors, including the energy, transport, industry, agriculture, forestry and waste management sectors (Article 4.1(c))

(b) The conservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of sinks and reservoirs of all greenhouse gases, including biomass, forests and oceans (Article 4.1(d))

(c) Improving endogenous capacities and capabilities to participate in scientific, technological, technical, socio-economic international and intergovernmental programmes and networks relating to research and systematic observation and development of data archives, intended to further the understanding and to reduce uncertainties regarding the causes, effects, magnitude and timing of climate change and the economic and social consequences of various response strategies, including the full, open and prompt exchange of relevant information (Article 4.1(g) and (h))

(d) Education, training of experts, and public awareness, including encouraging the widest participation in the preparation of the national communication (Article 4.1(i))

11. The communication may also provide information on needs for cooperation in preparing for adaptation to the impacts of climate change, development and elaboration of integrated plans for coastal zone management, water resources, and agriculture, and for the protection and rehabilitation of areas, particularly in Africa, affected by drought and desertification, as well as floods (Article 4.1(e)).

12. The description of the steps could be structured along the following sectors, as appropriate:

- Energy and transformation industries
- Transport
- Industry (energy-related)
- Industry (non-energy)
- Residential and commercial

- Agriculture
- Land use change and forestry
- Coastal zone management
- Waste management
- Cross-sectoral

Any other information

13. Article 12.1(c) provides that the communication should include any other information that the Party considers relevant to the achievement of the objectives of the Convention and suitable for inclusion in its communication, including, if feasible, material relevant for calculations of global emission trends.

14. Article 4 of the Convention includes paragraphs related to financial resources and transfer of technology, and which also relate to the preparation of communications from Parties not included in Annex I. The provisions of Article 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9 are relevant in this context.

15. Article 4.10 provides for consideration of the situation of Parties with economies that are vulnerable to the adverse effects of the implementation of measures to respond to climate change. If Parties not included in Annex I seek such consideration, they should state clearly the special consideration they are seeking and provide an adequate explanation when submitting their communications.

16. The communications may also identify the technical and financial needs associated with proposed projects and response measures under Article 4, so that the COP can arrange for the provision of financial and technical support, in accordance with Article 12.7.

17. According to Article 12.4, developing country Parties may propose projects for financing, including specific technologies, materials, equipment, techniques or practices that would be needed to implement such projects, along with, if possible, an estimate of all incremental costs of the reductions of emissions and increments of removals of greenhouse gases, as well as an estimate of the consequent benefits.

National circumstances

18. A Party may wish to provide other information relevant to its situation. Relevant information could include the following:

(a) Population profile (for example, growth rates, population density and distribution, with some historical perspective and greenhouse gas emissions per capita)

(b) Geographic profile (for example, ecozones, land area and land use, including changes)

(c) Climatic profile (for example, data on heating and cooling degree days and rainfall and impacts of climate change)

(d) Economic profile (for example, gross domestic product (GDP), GDP per capita, GDP growth rates, GDP by sector, levels of poverty, and imports and exports, with some historical perspective and greenhouse gas emissions per GDP)

(e) Energy profile (for example, energy supply and consumption (by sector, fuel type, per capita, per unit of GDP), energy intensity and energy pricing for commercial and non-commercial consumers (including taxes), with some historical perspective)

(f) Social profile (for example, information such as percentage of population dependent on agriculture, average dwelling size, number of vehicles per capita and per family unit, and personal and freight traffic (billions km/person) by type (air, rail, road, and public/private), livestock population and standard livestock units per unit area)

Structure and executive summary

19. The information provided in accordance with these guidelines should be communicated by a Party to the COP in a single document. Any additional or supporting information may be supplied through other documents such as a technical annex.

20. A communication should include an executive summary that would present the key information and data from the full document. The executive summaries will be translated and distributed widely. In view of the limits on translation, it would be useful to envisage an executive summary of no more than five pages.

Language

21. The communications may be submitted in one of the official languages of the United Nations. Parties should, where relevant, also submit a translation of their communication into one of the working languages of the United Nations.

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